

## **AGENDA ITEM III C-1**

### **PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

#### **Louisiana State University at Alexandria**

##### **Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In early Spring 2000, the Board of Regents received a proposal from Louisiana State University at Alexandria requesting permission to offer an Associate of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education. Faculty at three in-state institutions were selected to review the proposal. Reviewers' comments and institutional responses to these comments are reflected in the summary below:

### **STAFF SUMMARY**

#### **1. Program Description**

The objective of the proposed program is to prepare students with an interest in the education of young children and a desire to work in direct care. The degree consists of courses from the core curriculum of the Associate of Arts Degree and major courses in Early Childhood Education, Education, and Psychology. The degree is designed to be a *career degree* at the associate level and to lead directly into the work force. As an additional advantage, this degree is also designed to serve as a *transfer degree* into the LSU Senior College Elementary Education program and the undergraduate degree program in Early Childhood Education offered by Northwestern State University. Therefore, students wishing to continue their education and earn a Baccalaureate Degree will find that the Associate in Early Childhood Education degree facilitates this endeavor.

At the completion of the 65-70 hour curriculum, students will be awarded an Associate of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education. The reviewers and staff had the following curricular concerns (the institutional response is provided in *italics*):

Reviewers have determined that the amount of coursework required in the area of Early Childhood Education (approximately 3 courses) is insufficient. Some suggestions for additional coursework include the following: Organization and Administration of Early Childhood Programs; Child Nutrition; Child's Environment; and Infants and Toddlers. These courses would help meet the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Guidelines for Associate Degree-Granting Institutions and Technical Schools. If these changes were made, the degree would more closely articulate with proximate bachelors degree programs in Early Childhood Education.

*The addition of more coursework in Early Childhood Education is needed. We will add at least two courses. The specific courses will be selected by the faculty in cooperation with the LSUA Lay Advisory Committee for Early Childhood Education.*

Methods courses should be designed specifically for Early Childhood Education as opposed to Elementary Education.

*We will collaborate with the advisory committee concerning adding a methods course designed specifically for Early Childhood.*

It is suggested that the ECED 2999 (Practicum in Early Childhood Education) course be 3 credit hours. Clarification is needed regarding how many hours students will be required to observe and work with young children.

*As the proposal was written, students may choose to take the practicum from 1-3 hours. For each hour credit, the student must work with young children for a minimum of 15 hours.*

It is suggested that both the EDCI 2025: Foundations and Principles of Teaching in the Elementary School and EDCI 2700: Characteristics of Exceptional Children be required, as opposed to a choice of one.

*We are already adding Early Childhood courses which is the focus of the degree. We will consider requiring the course in exceptional children. The decision will be made by the faculty in collaboration with the advisory committee.*

Information is needed regarding student advisement and counseling.

*Students will be advised by faculty in early childhood education, psychology, education, and kinesiology.*

## **2. Need**

Central Louisiana has a need for educated, trained personnel in early childhood development. This need has been documented by data collected that indicates community support for the development of the Early Childhood degree program. Federal emphasis in this area and increased demands for credentials for personnel working in early childhood development (e.g., Head Start Act, 1998) suggest this program will be well received. With the completion of the LSUA Children's Center, the opportunity to provide high quality, practice-based instruction is optimal. It is believed that a program such as the one proposed will result in continued support and benefits for both the LSUA student seeking the degree as well as the many children in the Central Louisiana community who come in contact with knowledgeable, well educated early childhood educators.

## **3. Students**

It is projected that 30 students will enroll in the program during the first year, and that enrollment will increase to 60 students for year two and subsequent years. The institution expects that 5 individuals will graduate from the program in year two, followed by 8 graduates in year three, and 10 graduates per year for subsequent years. The reviewers and staff had the following concerns (the institutional response is provided in *italics*):

Information regarding recruitment of students is needed.

*Recruitment for this program will involved several venues, including the traditional campus recruiting activities. Additionally, members of the lay advisory committee represent a section of the community with interest in*

*this area and we will ask them to assist. Finally, the campus will distribute information to current students, new students, and all advisors.*

Information is needed on how academically disadvantaged students will be assisted. Reviewers note that Head Start teachers are well known for their low educational status and capability; thus, they will require remediation.

*LSUA is an open admissions institution. Because many students need remediation, we are accustomed to addressing such issues. Academically disadvantaged students will be assisted by professional staff at the Counseling Center. Placement services will specify any needed remedial courses. The campus regularly offers a section of developmental courses in reading, study skills, English, and math. Also, student tutors and extensive review/practice software packages are available on campus.*

#### **4. Faculty**

The reviewers and staff had the following concerns regarding faculty (the institutional response is provided in *italics*):

No faculty members have a graduate degree in Early Childhood Education. While some may have an add-on certification to an Elementary Education degree, reviewers felt that the addition of a faculty member(s) who have expertise in Early Childhood Education would strengthen and stabilize the program.

*LSUA will hire a new faculty member with expertise in Early Childhood Education to coordinate the new program. It is anticipated that advertisement for this position will take place during the Fall 2000 with an appointment date of January 2001.*

#### **5. Library and Other Special Resources**

Library and other educational support services expenditures are projected at \$4,500 for year one and \$2,500 per year for subsequent years. The reviewers and staff had the following concerns regarding this area (the institutional response is provided in *italics*):

Library holdings are limited and thus information is needed on how this will be rectified.

*Library holdings are already being expanded in the area of early childhood education. We will continue to expand in this area.*

#### **6. Facilities and Equipment**

The reviewers and staff had the following concerns regarding this area (the institutional response is provided in *italics*):

Laboratory facilities, other than the Children's Center, should be used for student practica to provide a broader array of experiences.

*Students will also be given an opportunity to participate in Head State centers and other early childhood facilities deemed appropriate by the*

*advisory committee.*

Specifics on the role of the Children's Center in the proposed curriculum and how it will support the program are required.

*In addition to providing opportunities for practicum exposure, the LSUA Children's Center will also be available for observation in education, psychology, and kinesiology courses.*

**7. Administration**

The program will be administered through the Division of Liberal Arts.

**8. Accreditation**

Currently, there is no program accreditation for an associate degree in Early Childhood Education.

**9. Costs**

Total projected costs for the program are \$31,220 for year one and \$48,740 for subsequent years.

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

The proposed program falls within the role, scope, and mission of LSU-A. Through several institutional responses, the institution concurred and adequately addressed the recommendations identified by the reviewers and the Regents' staff, particularly those dealing with faculty and library holdings. Given that all areas of concern were properly addressed, the staff recommends approval.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

*The staff recommends approval for the proposed Associate of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education (CIP Code 13.12.04) at Louisiana State University at Alexandria.*